

# The Napoleon Series

## The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume III the Saxons in Our Ranks Chapter One Part IV: Campaign of 1806 – 1807

By Commandant Sauzey

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### Battle of Friedland (14 June 1807).

The corps of Marshal Lannes did not reach Heilsberg (Lidzbark Warmiński) until the evening of the battle of that name; he was at the extreme right of the French army; he only felt out the enemy, but did not engage. After the retreat of the Russians, this corps took the head of the French army, and reaching Domnau (Domnovo); he sent the 9<sup>th</sup> Hussars immediately to Friedland to reconnoiter; this regiment, brought back by more than 30 squadrons, was immediately rescued by the Saxon light horse and cuirassiers, while the army corps set out to displace the Russian cavalry on the Alle River.

Arrived at Posthenen, in front of Friedland, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June at 1 o'clock in the morning, with only a part of his army corps (Oudinot Division: 7,000 men, Grouchy's dragoons: 1,800 men, 9<sup>th</sup> Hussars, Saxon light cavalry and cuirassiers: 1,200 men) Lannes made arrangements to stand up to the Russians, waiting for his other divisions and the rest of the army. The Saxon cavalymen launched by Grouchy furnished several successful charges against the Russian cavalry:

"...the dragoons and French and Saxon cuirassiers made the most beautiful charges and took 4 cannons (*79<sup>th</sup> Bulletin*)."

The situation of Lannes was most dangerous: he was fighting with his weak vanguard against the whole army of Bennigsen.

Fortunately the cuirassiers of Nansouty soon arrived; the Dupas Division (of the corps of Mortier) and the Verdier Division. The obstinacy of the fight was extreme. The enemy masses could never force the Sortlack Wood.

"...Around 9 o'clock, a Russian regiment having occupied a fir wood on the right of the grenadiers, Oudinot had it dislodged by two battalions of the Ruffin Brigade; then, taking advantage of the disorder of their retreat, he ordered Colonel Gauthrin of the 9<sup>th</sup> Hussars to sweep the plain with his regiment and the Saxon cuirassiers to break into the infantry which covered the village of Friedland..." (*Memoirs of Grenadier Pils*).

Finally, the Emperor and Ney arrived; the latter received the mission to take the bridges of Friedland, the army would then throw the Russians in the Alle

Lannes formed the center, having behind it the division of dragoons of La Houssaye and the Saxon cavalry; the latter has already been used several times since the morning; its strength, which was at the beginning of the battle was 600 horses, for the three squadrons of cuirassiers and of 200 for the squadron of light horse was already decimated. When Ney took the bridges, after entering Friedland, the Emperor pushed his left forward and launched Ney onto the city.

"...The grenadiers of Oudinot and their cavalry were in the second line. The Saxon cuirassiers, with their brilliant red uniforms, attracted the attention of the enemy and served as a point of reference for its gunners; several times Oudinot had to change their place, because they had lost the everyone..." (*Pils*).

Pils made a mistake: it was the light horse, and not the Saxon cuirassiers, who wore a red uniform.

The Russians were crushed in front of Friedland which was in our hands, or fell and drowned in the Alle.

The Saxon infantry of the corps of Marshal Lannes amounted to 4,000 men (according to a note written in the hand of the Emperor). But it had been left at Heilsberg, except however 3 battalions (1,200 men) who following some relations were at the battle of Friedland.

The Emperor sent a Saxon officer to the King of Saxony to announce his victory.



**LE MARÉCHAL LANNES**  
(Extrait de *l'Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, de THIERS).  
(Combet et C<sup>ie</sup>, éditeurs).

**MARSHAL LANNES**  
(Extract from *the History of the Consulate and the Empire*, of THIERS).  
(Combet and Co., editors).

After the conclusion of peace at Tilsit (now Sovetsk), Napoleon divided the army into four great commands: Marshal Davout had the 1<sup>st</sup>, comprising the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, the Saxons, the Poles, and several cavalry divisions; he occupied Poland until it was organized, then the Saxons returned to Saxony.

The Saxons had made their entry into our ranks.

We had shown them the way to victory; for seven years they would fight bravely, whenever French troops were in their number; but their own value would always be relative: abandoned to themselves, in a separate corps, they would have many failings.

We will show it, by accompanying them in the following campaigns, where they will bring us the support of their confederation contingent.

LES SAXONS DANS NOS RANGS

2.



UNIFORMES SAXONS — 1809

Cuirassier de la Garde  
Voltigeur du rég' du Prince Maximilien      Artilleur  
Grenadier de la Garde

SAXON UNIFORMS -- 1809

Cuirassier of the Guard  
Voltigeur of the Regt. of Prince Maximilien      Artillery  
Grenadier of the Guard

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